



FERRARI VIBES

Testing the Ferrari Testarossa

Is there any name more famous in the world of motoring than Ferrari? The maker of some of the most valuable and beautiful cars in the world—with an unsurpassed motor sport history spanning seven decades—Ferrari is an intoxicating combination. With an Italian flair that is utterly beguiling, Ferrari is the world's most powerful brand, and most people would agree that it encompasses these three words: speed, luxury and wealth. One of the most iconic Ferraris of all time has to be the Testarossa. This model exemplified the glorious excesses of the 1980s and is one of my favorite cars of all time. Like many people of my generation, a picture of one adorned my bedroom wall when growing up, and driving one has always been high on my bucket list. You can therefore imagine my excitement when a friend of mine asked me to acquire one for him in the U.K.—and then offered to lend it to me for the weekend.

A little background then on this extraordinary company. Founded by Enzo Ferrari, after many years of preparing Alfa Romeo racing cars for gentleman racers, Ferrari started manufacturing road cars with its iconic prancing horse logo in 1947. Initially he was somewhat reluctant to sell his cars, and he saw it only as a means to fund Scuderia Ferrari, the motor racing side of the business about which he was so passionate. However, as success on the track increased, so did the desirability of his road cars. Since production of the legendary road-going racer the 250GTO (examples of which, at \$40

million each, are the most valuable cars in the world) and the utterly gorgeous 250SWB California Spyder in the 1960s, the company has not looked back. Today Ferrari produces more than 7,000 cars a year. The last car that Enzo personally oversaw before his death in 1988 was the F40, surely one of the most famous supercars ever built.

The Testarossa (literally “Red Head”) was unveiled at the 1984 Paris Salon and was an evolution of the 512BBi, albeit with a striking new body by Pininfarina. And striking it certainly is in the flesh, sitting on the driveway, waiting for me. It was the widest production car at the time, and its presence is extraordinary, those very distinctive “cheese grater” side strakes giving it an unmistakable profile. I must confess to excitement levels being really rather high as I reach under the strakes to the hidden door handle. Inside are acres of ocean blue leather and the very distinctive Ferrari gear lever, standing proud at the open gate.

I have decided that you don't need any reason to take a Ferrari out on the road other than pure pleasure. The sun is shining and I have a route in mind that will take me through Newmarket (the headquarters of horse racing and itself home to many pedigree Thoroughbreds), and out into the countryside. Some long straights and some really twisty back roads will show if it can live up to its reputation as the ultimate 1980s grand touring sports car. I turn the key, and the 4.9 liter flat-12 whirs from behind me and then explodes into life. I slide the gear lever down and to the left in the “dogleg” box and gently let out the

heavy clutch, and I'm away. There is no power assistance to the steering, so maneuvering at low speeds is hard work (and not a little bit scary when there are immovable objects such as stone walls and gateposts to negotiate).

However, out on the road, with engine and gearbox fully warmed, I can finally unleash the beast. The steering lightens up with speed, making the car very easy to place despite its width. Soon I am making the most of the noise from the flat-12, a sort of thrumming that at its crescendo reaches a fevered howl that can be heard from miles around. The only thing better than the sound of the engine is the delicious *snick-snick* of metal on metal as you change gears, which I do a great deal in order to savor that particularly Ferrari trait.

The English countryside looks even more glorious from inside a Testarossa as the hedgerows flash past the side windows. I must confess that driving purely for one's own pleasure in such a magnificent machine, and one that I had been excited to drive for the best part of 30 years, truly had me grinning from ear to ear and very reluctant to hand back the keys. However I feel very privileged to have driven a "proper" Ferrari, born in an era when il Grande Vecchio (the Great Old Man) was still alive. It certainly exceeded all my expectations, and now I don't just want one on my wall. ♦

Ferrari Testarossa: Born to Run

Fast facts about Ferrari from behind
the Testarossa's wheel

1947: The year the first Ferrari emerged from the historic factory entrance on Via Abetone Inferiore in Maranello.



2: The number of first official Ferrari 125 S models ever made.

38,100,000: Dollars spent at an auction of the most expensive car ever sold in the world, a 1962 Ferrari 250 GTO Berlinetta.

1984: The year the Ferrari Testarossa (Type F110) went into production.

16,124: Number of miles on the iconic 1986 Ferrari Testarossa driven by Sonny Crockett (played by Don Johnson) around Miami on the 1980s hit TV show *Miami Vice*.

45: Percent of Ferrari cars sold in the company's signature red color.

13: Age Enzo Ferrari (1898-1988) drove his first car.

149: The mph speed of the Formula Rossa, the world's fastest roller coaster, located at Ferrari World in Abu Dhabi.

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